

AoA Older Americans Month 2008 Program Champion



Project: ¡Usted puede... mejore su salud! (“*You Can...Improve your health*”)

Organization: Puerto Rico Office for the Ombudsman for the Elderly

Project Description:

The “*You Can...Improve your health*” program is working to improve the health of older adults. The Puerto Rico Office for the Ombudsman for the Elderly is partnering with both Area Agencies on Aging in Puerto Rico, 120 Senior Centers, 20 Community Senior Programs, “Vida Plena” (a non-for-profit organization), and the Sacred Heart University to carry out this project.

The “*You Can...Improve your health*” program elements include:

- An initial training session for the description of the program and its basic components: a) nutrition education, b) adapted exercise routines and c) the systematic use of a pedometer with daily recording of steps.
- Distribution of educational materials and a booklet for tracking progress along individual measurements and pedometer results.
- Conducting weekly group meetings to cover nutritional information and tips as well as exercises and weighting of participants.

The expected outcome/results among participants by the end of the 12 weeks include:

- Improvement in control of chronic conditions such as: Diabetes, High Blood Pressure and Heart Conditions.
- Prevention of falls with improved muscle tone, coordination and balance
- Weight reduction
- Improve nutritional qualities of food consumption
- Improve sense of wellbeing

Other expected products of the program:

- Literature in Spanish on nutrition and exercise
- Booklets for progress tracking including pedometer results
- Instructors manual
- Scientific publication with results of evidence based trial.

The State and AAAs have provided the coordination and funding of personnel and educational materials for the Program. Senior Centers are scheduling the weekly meetings, providing the facilities and personnel. Vida Plena” is conducting an evidence based scientific trial where a group of 30 participants is been tested in several bio-

functional variables before and after a 12 weeks of program participation (these include blood pressure, glucose levels, muscle tone, body-fat, and heart rate). The trial also includes a control group for comparison purposes. Faculty from the Sacred Heart University will conduct the evaluation and analysis of data from the scientific trial.

For more information on this project contact Juanita Aponte Morales (787) 721-6121 ext. 231 or (787) 729-3116 or via e-mail at japonte@ogave.gobierno.pr.